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ABSTRACT

Junior college transfer students at Florida State University who dropped out of the university were surveyed to determine their reasons for leaving and their perceptions of the university. In addition to an analysis of questionnaire results for the total sample of respondents, two subgroups were analyzed separately: (1) students who received financial aid and those who did not, and (2) students with high self-reported grade point averages (GPA) (3.01-4.00), students with medium GPAs (2.01-3.00), and students with low GPAs (0-2.00). Respondents were almost equally divided between the sexes: 93 percent were between the ages of 19 and 29: and 89 percent were Caucasians. Responses of the total group indicated: 26.7 percent did not have enough money to go to school: 20.5 percent were dissatisfied with the major department: 20.1 percent had low grades: 18.0 percent had personal problems: and 17.2 percent moved out of the area. Characteristics or services of the university that provided great satisfaction and little satisfaction and factors that would have most encouraged the students to stay are also presented. Variables that significantly differentiated financial aid recipients from nonrecipients are: conflict between job and studies, insufficient financial aid, counseling/guidance services, and financial aid opportunities. Additional analyses are provided. (SW)

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Retention Efforts: Could They Be Misdirected?

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Abstract

Reports prepared for the EEO Subcommittee on Black Student Retention (see Appendix A) indicated that, although attrition rates for undergraduates at FSU were below the national rate (approximately 32% after one year for freshmen entering public four-year institutions during Fall 1977), retention of transfer students at the University appeared to be more of a problem than that of entering freshmen. A review of existing University programs/policies aimed at improving student retention revealed that most of the efforts were geared toward the first-time-in-college student.

Our programs with regard to FTIC's appeared to be working (FSU's attrition rate of 24 percent compared to national rate of 32 percent). The decision was made to survey junior college transfers who "dropped out" of the University to determine their reasons for leaving. It was hoped that the results of the survey could be used to improve programs/policies aimed at retaining transfer students.

This paper reports the results of the survey. The students were asked to indicate their reasons for leaving the University and report their perceptions of the University as well. Separate analyses were run grouping respondents into "High", "Medium", and "Low" GPA components and into "Financial Aid Recipient"/"Non-Financial Aid Recipient".

Survey of Junior College Transfers No Longer Enrolled at Florida State University

Introduction

In Fall 1977 the EEO Subcommittee on Black Student Retention was established at Florida State University to determine the problems surrounding retention of black students and offer possible solutions. Analyses were conducted which looked at retention rates not only by race but also by type of student at time of first entry to the University. As a result of the analyses performed, a particular problem was noted with regard to attrition rates for junior college transfers. One recommendation of the Retention Subcommittee was to "... closely monitor the progress of junior college transfers ..." and "...do a follow-up study of students who have left the University..."

Purpose

This paper discusses the results of a survey of students who had transferred to Florida State University from a community college but left the University before obtaining a degree.

Method

Participants

Using Student Data Course Files (Official BOR reporting tapes for enrollments) we identified those students transferring from a Florida Community College to Florida State Fall 1975 or later who were enrolled at the university during Fall 1977 but failed to return to the University during Fall 1978. Students who received

a Bachelor's degree between Fall 1977 and Fall 1978 were not included in the survey.

Instrument

Using the NCHEMS document A Manual For Conducting Student Attrition Studies in Institutions of Postsecondary Education as a guide, a questionnaire was developed which asked respondents to indicate their reasons for leaving the University. Students were also surveyed regarding their perceptions of the University

Procedure

A packet containing a cover letter from President Bernard F. Sliger, the questionnaire, and a postage - paid return envelope was forwarded to each student identified as belonging to the survey group. The packages were mailed first class in order to differentiate between those questionnaires which could not be delivered and those which were delivered but not returned. An SPSS file was created from the returned questionnaires for use in conducting various analyses.

Results

Sample

Of the 1203 questionnaires mailed, 141 could not be delivered. Of the remaining 1062 questionnaires, 251 were returned. Questionnaires from 45 students were not usable because of inappropriate responses; therefore, responses from 206 questionnaires were analyzed for this study.

Analysis

Prior to any in-depth analyses of questionnaire results, an assessment of differences between respondents and nonrespondents was undertaken. Although the sample represented only 19.4% of the population, chi square analyses indicated that no significant differences were found between the sample and the population with respect to such demographic variables as sex, race and age. Therefore, it was concluded that the respondents to the questionnaire were a representative sample of community college transfers who were enrolled at Florida State during Fall 1977 but failed to return to the University during Fall 1978.

In addition to an analysis of the questionnaire results for the total sample of respondents, two subgroups of the sample were analyzed separately. First of all, responses of students who received financial aid were compared with responses from students who did not receive financial aid. Secondly, responses of students with "high" self-reported GPAs (3.01-4.00) were compared with responses from students with "medium" and "low" GPAs (2.01-3.00 and 0-2.00, respectively) for selected items from the questionnaire. These analyses were undertaken for the purpose of 1) assessing the impact of financial aid on a student's perception of the University; and 2) investigating the differences between high, medium and low GPA students in terms of their reasons for leaving the University and their degree of satisfaction with selected aspects of the FSU campus.

Overall Findings

Respondents were almost equally divided between the sexes; 93 percent of the respondents were between the ages of 19 and 29 and 89 percent were Caucasians. Approximately one-fourth of the respondents were married and 82.4 percent indicated they were full-time students during their stay at the University. Over 58 percent of those students responding to the questionnaire reported that they had received no financial aid at any time during their last three quarters at FSU; 34.8 percent reported that they had been on academic probation while enrolled. Fifty percent of the respondents reported GPAs between 2.01 and 3.00, while 26.1 percent of them reported GPAs between 3.01 and 4.00 and 23.9 percent reported GPAs between 0 and 2.00.

Fifty percent of the respondents were not employed during their stay at the University, while 18.3 percent worked 11-20 hours per week. Approximately 52% of the respondents reported that they were already attending or planned to attend another college or university; while 16 percent of those responding indicated that the planned to again enroll at FSU at a later date.

The percentage of responses to Items 22 and 23 were used to evaluate the relative importance of a particular Reason for Leaving (Item 22), and the Degree of Satisfaction of students with aspects of the institution (Item 23).

The percentage of respondents indicating that an item was a "major" reason for leaving the University included:

Not enough money to go to school	26.7%
Dissatisfaction with major department	20.5%
Low grades	20.1%
Personal problems	18.0%
Moved out of the area	17.2%

The characteristics of Florida State or services provided by the University in which students indicated "much" or "great" satisfaction were:

Location of the school	51.5%
Library services	50.8%
Recreational facilities	45.9%
The school in general	45.3%
Intellectual stimulation	40.1%

Those areas in which respondents expressed "little" or "no" satisfaction included:

Academic advising services	45.1%
Amount of contact with teachers	43.3%
Counseling/guidance services	40.2%
Scheduling of classes	39.2%
Financial aid opportunities	33.3%

Respondents were also requested to list three factors (from item 23) which, if changed for the better, would have <u>most encouraged</u> them to stay at FSU. For purposes of analysis, these factors were ranked according to the degree of importance indicated by the respondent (i.e., 3 points for the most important factor, 2 for the second most important, and 1 for the third most important factor).

The top five ranked factors, listed in order of importance, were the following:

1. Counseling/guidance services
2. Course content in major field
3. Amount of contact with teachers
4. Academic advising services
5. Financial aid opportunities

Selected Analyses

In addition to an analysis of the questionnaire results for total sample of respondents, two subgroups of the sample were analyzed separately. Using the SPSS program CROSSTABS, 1) responses of student receiving financial aid were compared with responses from students who did not receive financial aid; and 2) responses of students with high self-reported GPAs (3.01-4.00) were compared with responses from students with medium and low self-reported GPAs (2.01-3.00 and 0-2.00, respectively) for selected items from the questionnaire.

Of the 22 items selected from the questionnaire for investigation, chi square analyses identified four items where responses from students receiving financial aid significantly differed (at the .05 level) from responses of students who did not receive financial aid. These items were the following:

Item 22. (10) Conflict between job and studies
Item 22. (16) Financial aid was not sufficient
Item 23. (1) Counseling/guidance services
Item 23. (5) Financial aid opportunities

The fact that three of these items dealt with the financial aspect of the University was not surprising; what was interesting, however, was the fact that in all three of these items the students receiving financial aid were the most dissatisfied with this aspect of the institution (see Tables 1-3). The group receiving financial aid also responded more negatively toward the counseling/guidance services provided by this University than those students who did not receive financial aid (see Table 4).

Table 1

COMPARISON OF FINANCIAL AID AND NON-FINANCIAL AID STUDENT RESPONSES FOR QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM 22 (10).

Reason for Leaving - Conflict Between Job and Studies

	Not a Reason for Leaving	Minor Reason for Leaving	Moderate Reason for Leaving	Major Reason for Leaving	Total
Non-Financial Aid	80	10	5	15	110
Financial Aid	56	4	14	9	83
Total	136	14	19	24	193

Chi Square = 8.968 with 3 df p = .0297

Table 2

COMPARISON OF FINANCIAL AID AND NON-FINANCIAL AID STUDENT RESPONSES FOR QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM 22 (16).

Reason for Leaving - Financial Aid was not Sufficient

	Not a Reason for Leaving	Minor Reason for Leaving	Moderate Reason for Leaving	Major Reason for Leaving	Total
Non-Financial Aid	100	1	3	4	108
Financial Aid	50	9	5	17	81
Total	150	10	8	21	189

Chi Square = 28.3554 with 3 degrees of freedom p = .0000

Table 3

COMPARISON OF FINANCIAL AID AND NON-FINANCIAL AID STUDENT RESPONSES FOR QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM 23 (1).

Degree of Satisfaction - Counseling/guidance Services

	Does Not Apply	Great Satisfaction	Much Satisfaction	Moderate Satisfaction	Little Satisfaction	None	Total
Non-Financial Aid	18	3	13	40	25	13	112
Financial Aid	8	8	5	21	21	19	82
Total	26	11	18	61	46	32	194

Chi Square = 12.7305 with 5 degrees of freedom p = .0260

Table 4

COMPARISON OF FINANCIAL AID AND NON-FINANCIAL AID STUDENT RESPONSES FOR QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM 23 (5).

Degree of Satisfaction - Financial Aid Opportunities

	Does Not Apply	Great Satisfaction	Much Satisfaction	Moderate Satisfaction	Little Satisfaction	None	Total
Non-Financial Aid	60	2	6	10	14	18	110
Financial Aid	9	8	12	21	25	7	82
Total	69	10	18	31	39	25	192

Chi Square = 52.1675 with 5 degrees of freedom p = .0000

In ranking the factors which, if changed for the better, would have most encouraged them to stay at FSU (item 23), the two groups again differed to some extent. The top five ranked factors for the financial aid group were the following:

1. Financial aid opportunities
2. Counseling/guidance services
3. Amount of contact with teachers
4. Academic advising services
5. Cost of attending this school

Conversely, the top five ranked factors for the students not receiving financial aid were:

1. Course content in major
2. Academic advising services
3. Amount of contact with teachers
4. Teaching in the major field
5. Counseling/guidance services

Chi square analyses identified seven items from the questionnaire where responses from students with "high", "medium" and "low" self-reported GPAs were significantly different. These items were the following:

Item 22. (1) Low grades
Item 22. (5) Major or courses not available
Item 22. (21) Illness, personal or family
Item 22. (22) Personal problems
Item 23. (1) Counseling/guidance services
Item 23. (20) Amount of contact with teachers
Item 23. (21) Scheduling of classes

As shown in Tables 5 and 6, the differences between the groups can primarily be attributed to the fact that students with "low" self-reported GPAs gave consistently more negative responses to these items than did students with "medium" or "high" self-reported GPAs.

Table 5

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSE FOR LOW, MEDIUM AND HIGH SELF-REPORTED GPA STUDENTS FOR QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM 22*

Response	Not a Reason for Leaving			Major Reason for Leaving		
	Low GPA	Medium GPA	High GPA	Low GPA	Medium GPA	High GPA
Item	(N=44)	(N=92)	(N=48)	(N=44)	(N=92)	(N=48)
(1) Low Grades	16.3%	72.7%	95.5%	62.8%	6.8%	2.3%
(5) Major Not Available	100 %	76.7%	79.1%	0	18.6%	9.3%
(21) Illness	57.1%	74.4%	90.9%	23.8%	10.5%	6.8%
(22) Personal Problems	39.0%	69.8%	75.6%	31.7%	11.6%	11.1%

*For purposes of clarity the minor and moderate reasons for leaving were not presented.

Table 6

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSE FOR LOW, MEDIUM AND HIGH SELF-REPORTED GPA STUDENTS FOR QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM 23*

Response	Much or Great Satisfaction			Little or No Satisfaction		
	Low GPA	Medium GPA	High GPA	Low GPA	Medium GPA	High GPA
Item	(N=44)	(N=92)	(N=48)	(N=44)	(N=92)	(N=48)
(1) Counseling/guidance Services	9.6%	14.9%	15.6%	61.9%	39.0%	22.2%
(20) Amount of Contact with Teachers	14.2%	22.7%	39.6%	61.9%	42.0%	21.0%
(21) Scheduling of Classes	14.0%	19.3%	40.9%	51.1%	38.7%	25.0%

* For purposes of analysis, the "Much" and "Great Satisfaction" categories were combined for these items as were the "Little" and "No Satisfaction" categories.

The responses to Item 23 (Reasons for Staying) were again analyzed utilizing the respective GPA groupings. The factors were ranked for students with high, medium and low self-reported GPAs using the procedure described previously. The top six ranked factors for each group are listed in Table 7.

Table 7

RANKING OF "REASONS FOR STAYING" FACTORS
FOR
LOW, MEDIUM AND HIGH SELF-REPORTED GPA STUDENTS

Rank	Low GPA	Medium GPA	High GPA
1.	(1) Counseling/guidance Services	(19) Teaching in Major	(18) Course Content in Major
2.	(2) Academic Advising Services	(18) Course Content in Major	(5) Financial Aid
3.	(20) Contact with Teachers	(5) Financial Aid	(16) Cost of Attending
4.	(5) Financial Aid Opportunities	(1) Counseling/guidance	(4) Employment Opportunities
5.	(19) Teaching in Major	(21) Scheduling of Classes	(20) Contact with Teachers
6.	(17) Grading System	(20) Contact with Teachers	(21) Scheduling of Classes

Comments from Respondents

In general the comments written in by the respondents reflected the findings from the more structured sections of the questionnaire. A major portion of the respondents commented further on their personal reasons for leaving school (61 had family problems of some kind, including marriage, new babies, illness, etc.). Thirty-five comments dealt with dissatisfaction with financial aid and twenty-six persons commented on their academic problems. Seventeen respondents commented on problems within their major, ten persons were dissatisfied with teachers or teaching in general, nine others said their major field was not available. Other comments included: dissatisfaction with advising services, especially within academic departments (8 persons); problems with scheduling of classes, course requirements, registration and graduation (11 persons); conflicts between job and studies (8 persons). Five respondents mentioned the Chi Omega murders and six others felt the University was too large or that it was too far to travel to school.

Conclusions/Implications

Using responses of "None" or "Little" to Item 23 - Degree of satisfaction with FSU - as indicators of "dissatisfactions", the services listed below appear to be possible problem areas in retaining students.

(1) Academic Advising Services -

45.1% of respondents dissatisfied

(2) Amount of contact with teachers -

43.3% of respondents dissatisfied

(3) Counseling/guidance services -

40.2% of respondents dissatisfied

(4) Scheduling of Classes -

39.2% of respondents dissatisfied

(5) Financial Aid Opportunities -

33.3% respondents dissatisfied

APPENDIX A

Report on Retention
First-Time-In-College Entering As Freshmen

	Percentage Still Enrolled Undergraduate or Unclassifed			Percentage Receiving Bachelor's Degree			Attrition Rate*		
	After 1 Year	After 2 Years	After 3 Years	After 1 Year	After 2 Years	After 3 Years	After 1 Year	After 2 Years	After 3 Years
BLACK									
Entering 1975	76.1	65.7	55.6	0.0	0.0	1.5	23.9	34.3	42.9
Entering 1976	83.4	71.5		0.0	0.0	0.0	16.6	28.5	
Entering 1977	76.0			0.0			24.0		
WHITE									
Entering 1975	76.7	62.0	54.3	0.0	0.0	3.8	23.3	38.0	41.9
Entering 1976	74.5	60.6		0.0	0.0		25.5	39.4	
Entering 1977	75.6			0.0			24.4		

Junior College Transfers Entering As Freshmen, Sopomores or Juniors

	Percentage Still Enrolled Undergraduate or Unclassifed			Percentage Receiving Bachelor's Degree			Attrition Rate*		
	After 1 Year	After 2 Years	After 3 Years	After 1 Year	After 2 Years	After 3 Years	After 1 Year	After 2 Years	After 3 Years
BLACK									
Entering 1975	75.7	47.8	12.2	0.9	20.9	45.3	23.4	31.3	42.5
Entering 1976	66.2	39.0		0.0	25.7		33.8	35.3	
Entering 1977	69.0			0.0			31.0		
WHITE									
Entering 1975	73.2	35.0	13.2	0.7	32.5	51.6	26.1	32.5	35.2
Entering 1976	75.4	34.6		0.2	31.6		24.4	33.8	
Entering 1977	76.4			0.1			23.5		

* Defined for this report as Not Enrolled or no Bachelor's Degree